



A PARENT'S GUIDE ON

# Selecting and Monitoring Child Care

Produced by:

Divisions of Licensing Programs  
and  
Family Services  
Virginia Department of  
Social Services  
7 North Eighth Street  
Richmond, VA 23219-3301





## **Table of Contents**

Child Care Arrangements...What's Right for You? .....	2
What to Look for in Any Child Care Setting .....	9
Getting Started .....	10
Gathering Data.....	11
The First Call	
Interview with the Provider	
Tour of the Child Care Setting	
Making a Decision .....	22
Parent-Provider Partnership .....	23
Monitoring .....	26
Resources Available .....	28



## **Child Care Arrangements... What's Right for You?**

### **What's considered child care in Virginia?**

A child day program in Virginia is a regularly operating service arrangement for children where, during the absence of a parent or guardian, a person or organization has agreed to assume responsibility for the supervision, protection, and well-being of a child under the age of 13 for less than a twenty-four-hour period. There are a number of types of arrangements you can choose from. The general categories of care are in-home care and out-of-home care in a private home or a center.

### **Regulatory Requirements**

The law defines the types of child care subject to regulation. Not all child care is regulated. In Virginia, there are five types of family day homes. They are licensed, voluntarily registered, family day care system homes, local agency approved, and unregulated. Centers are either licensed, unlicensed, or unregulated. The allowed capacity, requirements, and level of monitoring vary among regulated care. There are no requirements for unregulated care.

In Virginia, a family day home provider is required to be licensed if at any one time she cares for more than five children from birth through age 12 in her home, other than her own children or children who reside in the home. In addition, a family day home provider who cares for more than four children under two years of age in her home at any one time, including her own children or children who reside in the home, must be licensed or registered. Similarly, all child care centers must be licensed unless they are exempt from licensure in accordance with the law.





## Types of Child Care

Child care settings in Virginia are usually one of the following:

### Private Homes

- **A licensed family day home** provides care for up to twelve children, excluding the provider's own children or children residing in the home, in a private home that is licensed by the Virginia Department of Social Services. These homes must maintain compliance with the *Minimum Standards for Licensed Family Day Homes*.
- **A voluntarily registered family day home** is a home that can serve up to five children, excluding the provider's own children or children residing in the home, and has registered with an organization that is under contract with the Virginia Department of Social Services. These homes must comply with requirements contained in the *Voluntary Registration of Family Day Homes: Requirements for Providers*. A small sample of these homes is monitored by the contract agencies and the Virginia Department of Social Services.
- **A family day system home** is a family day home serving no more than twelve children, excluding the provider's own children or children residing in the home. It is approved and monitored by an agency licensed by the state. The family day system and its homes must comply with the requirements contained in the *Minimum Standards for Licensed Family Day Care Systems*.
- **A local agency approved family day care home** meets caregiving standards set by the State Board of Social Services for use by local departments of social services. It can serve up to five children, excluding the provider's own children or children residing in the home. The purpose of local agency approval is to assist with the availability of child care for local agency clients. There is no rule forbidding the provider to care for children other than local agency clients.
- **An unregulated family day home** is not inspected by the state or its designee. It can legally provide care for no more than five children, excluding the provider's own children or children residing in the home, or no more than four children under the age of two, including the provider's own children or children residing in the home, at any one time. Homes that exceed capacity are operating illegally.



## Your Home

- **An in-home care arrangement** occurs when someone cares for your child in your home. This may be a live-in arrangement or an arrangement where the person provides care for part of the day. There are no licensing regulations for this type of care. The person may have a credential or formal training. As the employer you are responsible for finding someone who matches your requirements.

## Centers

- **A licensed child day center** provides care for two or more children in a setting other than a private home or 13 or more children at any location (e.g., private residence, center). Centers must comply with the requirements of *Minimum Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers*.
- **A unlicensed child day center** provides care for two or more children in a setting other than a private home and is not required by the *Code of Virginia* to be licensed. Religious exempt programs and certified preschools are the two types of unlicensed care. While these programs are not required to be licensed, the law requires them to meet certain requirements.
- **An unregulated child day center** provides care for two or more children in a setting other than a private home and is not required by the *Code of Virginia* to be licensed. An example of one type of unlicensed centers is certain short-term programs such as some camps and some recreation programs. Whether short-term programs must be licensed depends on factors such as the total amount of time they operate each year or the total amount of time a child is allowed to attend.

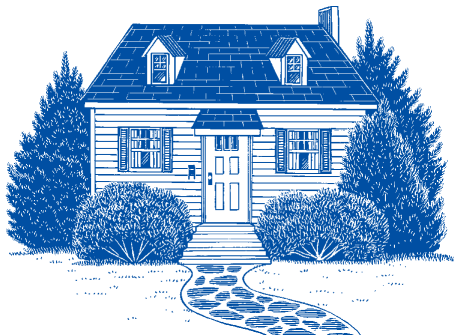




CHART A

## Child Care in Virginia

Type	Capacity	Monitoring	Complaint Investigations of Licensing Issues
Licensed Family Day Home	Maximum 12	Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) - twice a year	VDSS
Voluntarily Registered Family Day Home	Maximum 5	VDSS Approved Contract Agency randomly checks 10% of homes not on USDA Food Program, VDSS randomly checks 20% of all	VDSS and Contract Agency
Family Day System Home	Maximum 12	VDSS Approved System - quarterly	Family Day System
Local Agency Approved Family Day Home	Maximum 5	Local department of social services	Local department of social services
Unregulated Family Day Home	Maximum 5	None	Not Applicable
Your Home	Total resident children	None	Not Applicable
Licensed Child Day Center	2 or more at a setting other than a private residence, at least 13 or more at a private residence	VDSS - twice a year	VDSS
Unlicensed Child Day Center	2 or more	None	VDSS
Unregulated Child Day Center	2 or more	None	Not Applicable

NOTE: Every child in Virginia is protected by law against child abuse and neglect. Allegations of abuse and neglect are investigated by local departments of social services. The Child Protective Services Hotline number is 1-800-552-7096.



## **Advantages and Disadvantages of the Types of Care**

Each type of care has its advantages and disadvantages and good child care can take place in any setting. The information below lists some of the advantages and disadvantages. These are generalizations and should be viewed as such. There are exceptions to every statement made below.

### **Care in Your Home**

#### **Advantages**

- It is convenient and easier on the parents and the children. You do not have to get children up, dress and feed them, and take them out of the house. They can stay home when feeling bad (e.g., a cold).
- You have more control over the activities, equipment, and routine because it is your home and the provider is your employee.
- Children will probably be ill less often as in-home care decreases the amount of time they will be exposed to the illnesses of other children.
- Children may enjoy the security of being in their own home with their own possessions.



#### **Disadvantages**

- You are dependent on the caregiver to be present and on time. You are without a provider or must contact relief staff if the regular provider is late or absent.
- Your energy and food costs will rise as there will be someone in your home constantly.
- This is usually the most expensive type of care especially for just one child.
- Children are not around other children so they are not interacting with or learning from other children. This is not as much a factor for children whose siblings are being cared for in the home as well.
- There is little likelihood that other adults will be able to observe the provider so it becomes more important for you to return home at unexpected times to make sure all is well.





- Additional record keeping is required to comply with federal and state tax and wage codes. You will need to be aware of the requirements for minimum wage and income taxes. (Consult the *Fair Labor Standards Act*, Internal Revenue Service, and Virginia Department of Taxation.)

## **Family Day Homes**

### **Advantages**

- This is often the least expensive type of care, especially for infants and toddlers.
- A family setting is frequently warm and cozy and can be less intimidating for children and parents.
- The child normally has fewer changes in providers as the provider is the owner of the business.
- The number of children in care is small compared to a center. This arrangement exposes children to fewer people and illnesses.
- Family day homes are often more flexible about schedules, rules, and are less formal than centers.

### **Disadvantages**

- Home-based care may be closed more often than centers due to the provider's vacations, appointments, and illnesses unless the provider has arranged for substitute care.
- Most homes care for children of various ages so there may not be any children in the home who are the same ages or near the same ages of your children.
- Family day homes are contained in private residences. Sometimes the needs of the family and the child care program clash. For example, an ill family member may be unable to rest because of the sounds of others in the home.
- There are relatively few adults observing and monitoring the operation.
- As family day homes are not used exclusively for child care, homes are likely to have more safety hazards that the provider must manage and control.



## **Child Day Centers**

### **Advantages**

- Centers offer extended hours as they employ staff in shifts. Centers are frequently able to accommodate most parents' work schedules during the day.
- Children placed at centers are with other children that are their same age.
- Centers are created to provide safe environments for children and are not usually used for other purposes.
- Centers are more likely to have staff and equipment to serve special needs children with more serious physical handicaps.
- Centers offer the security of having more adults present or nearby.

### **Disadvantages**

- A center-based program with a large capacity may be more intimidating for children and parents.
- Center-based programs are often more expensive than family day home programs, especially for infants and toddlers.
- Most classrooms are grouped by age instead of mixed age groups. Some parents prefer their children be exposed to children of various ages or to be with siblings.
- While the child does not have to adjust to changes in the location, there are inherent changes that the child must adjust to in a center-based program. There are almost always promotions to a different class with a different teacher and with some unfamiliar classmates. In addition, some centers have a high turnover of staff which impacts the children's sense of trust and stability.
- A large operation (compared to a home-based program) often has more structure and less opportunity for spontaneity in the daily routine. For example, meal time and playground time are scheduled so that all classes can eat at an appropriate time and use the playground for an appropriate length of time.



## **What to Look for in Any Child Care Setting**

- Staff has training and experience in child development and the group care of children
- Environment is safe, clean, and uncluttered
- Environment is nurturing and encourages learning and growth
- It's a nice place to stay all day
- Program is responsive to the children's needs
- Program is responsive to the parents' needs





## Step 1: Getting Started

Once you've determined the type or types of care you would like to use, you need to get the names of providers to contact.

To obtain names of providers, contact any of the following:

- Virginia Department of Social Services (a directory of regulated providers is available in printed form and on the Internet)
- Virginia Statewide Human Services Information and Referral System
- United Way Agencies' Information and Referral Services
- Departments of early childhood development/education at universities/colleges
- Parents of young children
- Friends, neighbors, and people at your place of worship
- School teachers
- People working in child care
- Resource and Referral Programs
- Business bulletin boards
- Local newspapers and telephone directories



(Refer to pages 28 - 30 for additional information on how to contact these resources)

Now you have a list of possible providers. You might find it helpful to rank the choices based on the most to the least favorable locations. You are now ready to make your initial contact. The guide found on page 12 (telephone interview) will help you determine which providers should be considered for an in-person interview.

Before you begin interviewing providers, it is suggested that you be aware of what to look for in a provider. **A list of desirable characteristics for child care providers is available and can be obtained by contacting the Virginia Department of Social Services.**



## Step 2: Gathering Data

You will obtain important information from several methods to assist you in making your decision. Recommended methods include a telephone interview, an interview with the provider, and a tour of the child care setting.

Usually, the first contact is a telephone interview. Your initial contact should be brief. The goal is to narrow your list to likely candidates.

Once you have developed the list of persons you are seriously considering, you need to schedule on-site interviews. You should visit a program several times before placing your child there. Three types of visits are recommended. You should visit the program (1) without your child, (2) with your child and the provider, and (3) with your child, the provider and the other children in care. The three types of visits have been recommended to provide you with an opportunity to discuss issues with the provider as well as observe and evaluate the setting and interactions. Depending on your child's age, he/she may be able to help you make a decision based upon his/her "evaluation" of the setting. It is important that you and your child spend a sufficient amount of time at the program before making a decision.

Sample questions for the telephone interview, interview with the provider, and tour of the child care setting are provided.

*It is suggested that you make copies of pages 12-22 so you can use these tools when interviewing and touring each program you are considering.*





## Telephone Interview

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you now have or will you have openings on \_\_\_\_\_  
for my child(ren) age(s) \_\_\_\_\_ ? \_\_\_\_\_  
(date you will need care)
2. Are you available to keep my child(ren) on \_\_\_\_\_  
from \_\_\_\_\_ ? \_\_\_\_\_  
(days of the week you need care)  
(hours needed)
3. What would be the cost for this care? \_\_\_\_\_  
What does this include? \_\_\_\_\_  
Are there any other costs? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the total number of children for whom you currently provide  
care? \_\_\_\_\_  
What are the ages and genders of the children who would be in my  
child(ren)'s classroom(s) or in care in the home? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you or any person in the child care setting smoke? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you have any pets? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what are the types of animals  
and where are they during the hours you care for children? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What would be the routine and the types of activities for my  
child(ren)? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What are your discipline practices? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Are you licensed, registered, or exempt from licensure? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Impression of the provider: \_\_\_\_\_  
Would consider interviewing: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Note: If your child requires any special care, you would need to inquire about whether the provider is willing and capable of providing the necessary special care.

### Making a decision:

If based on the information provided it appears that this is a likely candidate, schedule an on-site interview. You may want to contact several providers before you begin scheduling on-site interviews.

Interview date and time: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Interview with the Provider

The following are questions which you need to have answered in order to effectively evaluate the program. You can get the information by interviewing the provider and reading the contract and policy statements.



### Program

1. What values and beliefs guide the child care program and its staff? (Things to consider include: Is the program centered around the children's needs? Are children valued and encouraged? Is the provider concerned about safety?) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What expectations would this program have of my child (e.g., behavior, level of functioning, participation)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What group would my child be in and what is that group's routine? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What type of discipline do you use? How frequently are children disciplined? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Describe the educational/activity part of your program. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Does your program have any special components? (Examples of special components include a religious or cultural focus, recreation activities such as dance or gymnastics, computer classes, and scouts.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Staff

*Coverage:*

7. How many children are you responsible for? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



8. What is the schedule for the staff? (In centers, there will be different staff throughout the work day as most centers are open at least 12 hours a day.) \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is your plan when the person ordinarily responsible for caring for my child is absent? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Is it likely that my child will have the same provider for at least a year? How long has the person who will be my child's teacher been with your program? Is the staff turnover low? For centers: How frequently do children change classes? (High staff turnover is harmful. It discourages children from forming trusting and secure relationships.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Qualifications:*

11. Generally, what is the educational background of the child care staff, and particularly those who will work with my child? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Generally, what experience does the staff have working with children, and particularly those who will work with my child? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Have the necessary checks been conducted on all persons directly involved with the children? (It is good practice, and in some cases required by regulations, to require criminal records checks, Child Protective Services Central Registry checks, and TB tests.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Is someone always present who is certified in first aid? Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or rescue breathing? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. Tell me about your staff development plan. What kind of orientation does staff receive? Are child care staff required to attend some training every year to improve child care skills? (Try to get a sense of whether the provider supports education and training of staff.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





### **Parent Involvement**

16. What are approved ways parents can be involved in the program? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. How are parents kept informed of and involved in their children's learning experiences? \_\_\_\_\_
18. Are parents encouraged to visit the program? (Note: Virginia law (§ 63.1-210.1) guarantees parents the right to access the center/home whenever their children are in care unless a court has ordered otherwise.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. What are my responsibilities in addition to financial obligations? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Rules**

20. What are the rules children and parents must abide by? (Too many rules may be a sign of an overly controlled environment or may make it difficult for your child to earn approval and success. Too few rules may indicate insufficient planning or structure.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
21. What is your policy on ill children? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
22. Are pets allowed at the facility? If allowed, what animals currently reside at the facility? Are all required immunizations current? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
23. Are there visitors in your center/home during the hours children are being cared for? If so, please explain who and why they are there and how often they visit? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Medication**

24. What is your policy on giving prescription and non-prescription medications to children in your care? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



25. Where are medications kept? (Medications should be kept out of reach of children.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Health and Safety**

26. What is your plan for handling emergencies? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
27. Are there any firearms or weapons on the premises? If so, are they kept locked and out of reach of children? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
28. Do you transport children? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, do you use appropriate seat belts and car seats for each child? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Business**

29. How long have you been in business? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
30. Do you have any plans for closing your business or retiring? (This is a particularly important question for family day homes.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
31. What are the hours of operation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
32. What days/weeks will the program be closed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
33. Are you regulated by the state? If so, what is the name of the licensing specialist or inspector? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
34. What organizations have you been certified/accredited by? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Costs**

35. What is the charge for care? \_\_\_\_\_  
(Sometimes there is a sliding fee scale.) What does it include? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Are there additional charges for things like transportation or field trips? \_\_\_\_\_

36. What is the method of payment (cash, check; due date)? \_\_\_\_\_

37. In January of each year, will you provide me with a statement of the total amount of money I have paid you for the previous year and your federal identification number? \_\_\_\_\_

38. Is there a minimum enrollment period? \_\_\_\_\_

(Most places require at least two weeks notice/paid service prior to termination and will provide you with two weeks notice. Some schools require enrollment for the entire school year.)

39. What do I need to supply (e.g., food, diapers, toys, equipment)? \_\_\_\_\_

40. What equipment do you have? (Ask about specific types of equipment required by your child now and in the future, e.g., cribs, car seats, high chairs, strollers, toys/climbers, computer) \_\_\_\_\_

41. Will I be charged for days my child is absent from the program (e.g., illness, vacation)? \_\_\_\_\_

## References

42. Please provide me with at least three names of parents of children who have received care from your facility. (At least one reference should be a parent of a child currently enrolled in the program who is not related to the provider.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## **Tour of the Child Care Setting**

Ask to tour the center/home and to observe the program in action. Look around all parts of the center/home, e.g., care and napping rooms, play-ground, bathrooms, diapering areas, stairs, entrances, etc.

### **Physical Setting:**

#### **1. Safety**

- ☐ a. Provider is prepared for emergencies. Has an emergency response plan, first aid kit, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.
- ☐ b. Facility is free of obvious safety hazards. Electrical outlets are safety-capped. Weapons, dangerous tools, medications and poisons are locked and out of reach of children.
- ☐ c. Play area is safe. Equipment is age and stage-appropriate and in good condition. Cushioning material (e.g., mulch, sand, wood chips, pea gravel, mats) is placed in all areas where there is a potential risk of injury to a child falling off a piece of equipment (e.g., climbing equipment, slides, and swings).

#### **2. Cleanliness**

- ☐ a. The facility is clean and free of odor.
- ☐ b. The bedding is safe, clean, and comfortable, and is not used by more than one child unless laundered between uses.

#### **3. Space**

- ☐ a. Things are in order, but not unnaturally so for children. The room does not appear cluttered. Children can easily find toys, books, and other play things.
- ☐ b. There is enough space for the number of children to play and move about safely and without being crowded.
- ☐ c. There is sufficient room for the number of things in the room (toys, books, furniture, etc.).



### **Nutrition**

- ☐ 4. The food and beverages served are nutritious and age and stage appropriate.
- ☐ 5. Children are offered water regularly.

### **Interaction between staff and children**

- ☐ 6. Children are being attended to.
- ☐ 7. Children are actively engaged by the provider or participating in an activity.
- ☐ 8. There are no children wandering around aimlessly.
- ☐ 9. Children and caregivers are obviously comfortable with and show affection for each other.
- ☐ 10. Caregiver makes good eye contact with the children.
- ☐ 11. Voice levels are calm and friendly, with no yelling, quarreling, or whining.

### **Physical care of children**

- ☐ 12. Children are kept clean.
- ☐ 13. Children's hands are washed after toileting and before and after eating.
- ☐ 14. Mealtimes are unhurried and happy occasions.
- ☐ 15. Children are spoken to in a respectful manner.





- ❑ 16. Young children are frequently hugged, held, and in close interaction with the staff.

### Activities

- ❑ 17. Children seem to feel good about themselves and proud of what they have accomplished.
- ❑ 18. Children are learning self-help skills appropriate to their ages.
- ❑ 19. Children seem to be enjoying their activities. (Activities should be somewhat challenging, but the activity should not cause the child to be overwhelmed or overly frustrated.)
- ❑ 20. The program offers many opportunities to promote children's needs for discovery, exploration, creative expression, building social skills, and developing a sense of self. There are many different areas which have materials for arts and crafts, science, pretend play, music activities, etc.





## Ratios and Groupings

- ❑ 21. Group size is age-appropriate. For infants and toddlers, the recommendation is no more than six or eight children in each group or cluster. For three-year olds, the recommended group size is no more than 12. For four- and five-year olds, groups should ideally be limited to 16.
- ❑ 22. There is an appropriate number of staff caring for the children (staff-to-child ratios). Required family day home ratios: 1:4 for birth through 15 months (one staff for every four children under 16 months), 1:5 for 16 through 23 months, 1:8 for two- through four-year olds, 1:16 for five to nine years of age, and there are no set ratios for children age 10 and older. Required child day center ratios: 1:4 for birth through 15 months, 1:5 for 16 through 23 months, 1:10 for two- to four-year olds, 1:12 for four-year olds until they are eligible to attend public school, 1:15 for balanced mixed age groups of three-, four-, and five-year olds, and 1:20 for school age children.





### Step 3: Making a Decision

Before you make your final selection, try to arrange for your child to have one or more visits to the center/home. Your child needs an opportunity to get acquainted. You need an opportunity to see how your child responds to the provider, the program, and the other children.



Sometimes, as a result of your information gathering, no particular provider stands out. In those cases, it might be helpful to rate each provider in the following four areas. This may help you make a decision.

#### Determining Factors

- **Beliefs about or philosophy of child care and children:**

Consider provider's view of her own role, of children, of parental involvement in the program, and children's learning (activities and daily routine).

\_\_\_\_\_ Appropriate      \_\_\_\_\_ Some Concern      \_\_\_\_\_ Inappropriate

- **Physical setting:**

Consider whether the physical setting both indoors and outdoors is clean and safe, there is adequate play equipment, and nutritious foods and ample servings are served.

\_\_\_\_\_ Adequate      \_\_\_\_\_ Some Concern      \_\_\_\_\_ Inadequate

- **Impression of or comfort with provider:**

Consider provider's personality, experience and educational background, and willingness to meet your needs.

\_\_\_\_\_ Suitable      \_\_\_\_\_ Some Concern      \_\_\_\_\_ Unsuitable

- **Total cost of care:**

The total cost for complete care is \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Things to consider: weekly rate, likely overtime charges, activity fees, what you need to provide, whether provider reports income to the government, and costs for all desired meals.

\_\_\_\_\_ Affordable      \_\_\_\_\_ Unaffordable





## **Parent-Provider Partnership**

For a placement to be truly successful, it is crucial that parents and providers work together. Open communication between parent and provider is essential. Any information which affects the placement needs to be shared between parents and providers. It is important that parents and providers agree on how to handle issues such as discipline, daily schedules, nutrition, and safety. Everyone benefits when information is shared between parent and provider.

### **Your Role as a Parent**

You are very important to the success of the placement. Both your child and the provider need your support.

#### **How to Support Your Child**

Explain to your child before the first day that he/she will be staying with Mrs. Jones while you are working, attending class, shopping, etc. Explain what activities he/she will be doing. Let your child know how you can be reached during the day. For very young children who are not able to tell you how they feel or are not able to comprehend what you're saying, it is even more important that you talk with them about how they might be feeling and reassure them that Mrs. Jones is a wonderful person whom you trust.



Help make this an easy transition for your child. When possible, attendance should be gradual at the beginning of a placement. The child's first day at the program without you should be a short stay. Gradually increase the time. Spend time, especially at first, with your child at the facility. Plan to stay a little longer in the mornings and afternoons to help your child make the adjustment and to provide information to and receive information from the provider. Give your child special attention, especially at the beginning and ending of placements.



There are several things you can do to help your child continuously feel secure with the placement. Develop and maintain a good relationship with your provider. Make drop-off and pick-up times happy times. If you are tense or dissatisfied, your child will pick up on those feelings and will not feel as secure with his/her placement. At home, look for cues that your child is happy with the placement. Note any behavior changes especially those that are severe or continue. If you suspect something is not right at the center/home, talk to your child about it. Always let your child know the door is open to discuss child care arrangements.

### **Information Parents Need to Give Providers**

The following is a list of information that your provider should always have. Some of it will change from day to day. ALWAYS give your provider the most up-to-date information.

- Emergency information: telephone numbers of where parents can be reached at all times, names and telephone numbers of all persons who can be contacted when parents can not be located, and names and telephone numbers of physicians and hospitals.
- List of persons authorized to pick up your child. If there is anyone you don't want to pick up your child, indicate that as well.
- Child's general health including any allergies and any special needs.
- Daily report. Inform your provider of any significant occurrence since she last cared for your child or any upcoming change. Examples: child had a restless night, child is congested, child is teething, family or a special friend is moving, parents are expecting a new baby, parents are separating, major illness or death of someone close to the child, a missing or ill pet, information about a new pet, etc.



## What to Expect from Your Provider

In addition to doing your part, you should expect that your provider will do her part as well. At a minimum, you should expect that the provider fulfill the terms of the contract. The contract usually only covers a very small part of what occurs in the child care program. Consequently, there will be additional expectations over and above those outlined in the contract.



The provider should inform parents about significant occurrences. Examples include changes in napping, eating, toileting, disposition, child's likes and dislikes, and issues with other children, including contagious illnesses affecting other children so that you can be alert to possible symptoms in your child. She should share new day care events, e.g., changes in staff, new activities, and schedule changes.

You should expect the provider to meet the child's basic needs during the period of time the child is in her care. Indicators that this is likely occurring include observation of a clean and safe environment, the serving of nutritious meals and snacks, and children being encouraged to learn and grow.

You should expect the provider to be pleasant to parents and children. You and your child should feel welcome at the child care program. As the parent-provider relationship matures, it should begin to feel like a friendship.

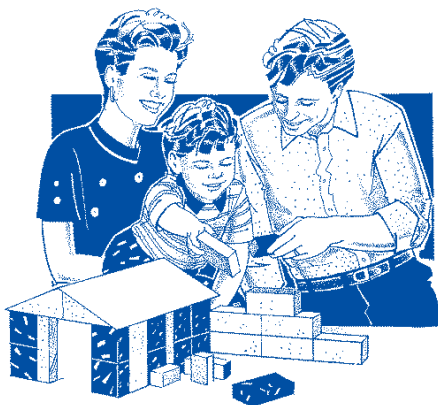


## Monitoring

Once you've made your decision, your job is not over. It is your responsibility as a parent to continuously monitor your child's day care arrangements.

It is important to make some unexpected visits as well as occasionally staying a little longer when you drop off your child and when you pick up your child. Child care providers should feel perfectly comfortable with your stopping by at any time. You should be considerate of the activity which is occurring at the time you arrive by trying to minimize the disruption.

Because needs and circumstances change, you should re-evaluate the program every three to six months and at any other time you have concerns. The areas to examine are: (1) the relationship between the provider and the children, (2) the discipline practices, (3) the educational/activity program, (4) the nutritional program, (5) the physical setting, (6) the playground, and (7) the relationship between the provider and you. A sample tool is provided.





## Provider's Report Card

Areas	Appropriate	Some Concern	Inappropriate	Comments
<b>Child-Provider Relationship:</b> Have the child and the provider developed a close relationship?				
<b>Discipline Practices:</b> Are you comfortable with the type and frequency of discipline used by the provider?				
<b>Educational/ Activity Program:</b> Is it age and stage appropriate?				
<b>Food and Beverage:</b> Are the child's nutritional needs being met?				
<b>Physical Setting:</b> Is it clean and safe?				
<b>Playground:</b> Is it safe? Is there adequate equipment?				
<b>Parent-Provider Relationship:</b> Is the relationship what you want it to be?				



## **For Additional Information**

### **Services**

Contact the **Virginia Department of Social Services** or a **Regional Office** to:

- Obtain a list of desirable characteristics of child care providers
- Obtain copies of state child care regulations
- Inquire about how standards are enforced
- Obtain a list of licensed providers
- File a complaint about a provider

Contact the **Virginia Department of Social Services** to obtain information about:

- Regulation of child care
- Provider training information

Contact a **Regional Office** to:

- Obtain information about providers you are considering
- Speak to a licensing inspector

### **Resources**

#### **Virginia Department of Social Services**

7 North Eighth Street  
Richmond, VA 23219-3301  
<http://www.dss.state.va.us>

#### **Division of Licensing Programs**

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
(804) 726-7154

#### **Division of Child Care and Development**

6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
(804) 726-7641

#### **Licensing Information Line**

Toll Free 1-800-543-7545  
(Richmond area only 692-2394)

#### **Virginia Child Care Resource and Referral Network**

1-800-451-1501



## **Regional Licensing Offices**

Central Regional Office  
1604 Santa Rosa Road  
Wythe Building, Suite 130  
Richmond, VA 23229-5008  
(804) 662-9743

Eastern Regional Office  
Pembroke Office Park  
Pembroke IV Office Building  
Suite 300  
Virginia Beach, VA 23462-5496  
(757) 491-3990

Peninsula Licensing Office  
729 Thimble Shoals Blvd.  
Oyster Point Park, Building 6,  
Suite 6-B  
Newport News, VA 23606  
(757) 594-7594

Northern Regional Office  
170 West Shirley Avenue, Suite 200  
Warrenton, VA 20186  
(540) 347-6345

Fairfax Licensing Office  
11320 Random Hills Road, Suite 200  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
(703) 934-1505

Verona Licensing Office  
P. O. Box 350  
68 Dick Huff Lane  
Verona, VA 24482-0350  
(540) 332-2330

Piedmont Regional Office  
Commonwealth of Virginia Building  
210 Church Avenue, SW  
Suite 100  
Roanoke, VA 24011-1779  
(540) 857-7971

Western Regional Office  
190 Patton Street  
Abingdon, VA 24210  
(276) 676-5490

## **Local Departments of Social Services**

Refer to your local telephone directory for telephone numbers and addresses.





## **Additional Resources**

### **Voluntary Registration Contract Agencies**

Child Nutrition, Inc.  
9 North Third Street,  
Suite 100  
Warrenton, VA 22186  
(540) 347-3767

Children, Youth and  
Family Services  
116 West Jefferson Street  
Charlottesville, VA 22902  
(434) 296-4118

Council of Community Services  
P.O. Box 598  
Roanoke, VA 24004  
(800) 354-3388

Memorial Child Guidance Clinic  
200 North 22<sup>nd</sup> Street,  
Richmond, VA 23223  
(804) 644-9590

Northampton Cooperative  
Extension Services  
5432-A Bayside Road  
Exmore, VA 23350  
(757) 414-0731

The Planning Council  
130 West Plume Street  
Norfolk, VA 23510  
(800) 477-3993

### **Family Day Systems**

Infant/Toddler Family  
Day Care of Northern Virginia  
10560 Main Street, Suite 312  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
(703) 352-3449

The Planning Council  
Family Day Home System  
130 West Plume Street  
Norfolk, VA 23510  
(757) 627-3993







**This book was written by  
Rhonda Harrell**

**Contributors:**

<b>Lib Whitley Baron</b>	<b>Doris Sherrod</b>
<b>Jane Brown</b>	<b>Carolynne Stevens</b>
<b>Vincent Jordan</b>	<b>Kathryn Thomas</b>
<b>Arlene Kasper</b>	<b>Kittie Winston</b>
<b>Paula Mercer</b>	

**Copyright © 1998**

**by**

Office of Training, Education, and Consultation  
Divisions of Licensing Programs and Family Services  
Virginia Department of Social Services  
Commonwealth of Virginia  
Richmond, Virginia

All materials that appear in this book may be reproduced for non-profit education or training activities. Special permission for such uses is not required. Altering of material is not permissible without prior approval of the author. The following statement must appear on all reproductions.

**Reproduced from**

***A Parent's Guide on Selecting and Monitoring Child Care***

**Copyright © 1998**

**by**

Office of Training, Education, and Consultation  
Divisions of Licensing Programs and Family Services  
Virginia Department of Social Services  
Commonwealth of Virginia  
Richmond, Virginia

This permission is limited to a reproduction of materials for non-profit educational or training events. Altering of material is not permissible without prior approval of the author. Systematic or large-scale reproduction or inclusion of items in publication for sale or for-profit training events may be done only with prior written permission from the author.



## Notes



